LOVEVERY®

Welcome to the Lovevery Play Gym Activity Guide. We're so glad you're here! Our child development specialists have created these activities to help you make the most of this important time in your child's life.

We are parents too. Each of us wants to do everything we can to help our children become their full selves. It just isn't always easy to know how. That's why we were inspired to create Lovevery.

Families have shared that doing these stage-based activities during the first year helps them to feel more confident. And remember, above all, you're the expert. No one knows your baby better than you!

For You

Give yourself

- The opportunity to take pride in the great job you are doing
- A break from thank you notes and too many visitors in the early weeks of parenthood
- Time to connect with your partner or a loved one
- A break from feeling guilty
- Skin-on-skin time with your baby—it is a natural stress reliever for you and important bonding time for your baby
- Peace with the clutter and chaos around your home
- Something just for you—a bubble bath, a scented candle, a cup of tea, new slippers, a short walk outside
- Moments of joy with your baby as they come—happiness is often found in the simple everyday
- Compassion as you try to balance all the new things happening in your life
- Time to notice how much your baby is changing, and how much you are both learning and growing

0-12 weeks

In the First 12 Weeks

Your baby

- Is easily overstimulated, especially in the first four weeks
- Can hear perfectly, distinguish your voice from others, and even hear the differences between languages
- Has clenched fists and will grip your finger
- Sees only in black and white
- Focuses 8 to 14 inches away—sometimes his eyes may cross
- Will have trouble tracking moving objects until he is about five weeks old
- May start to coo in response to your voice sometime around two months
- Can lift his chin up during tummy time; towards the end of this age range your baby may start to lift his chest up too

In the First 12 Weeks

Give your baby

- Quiet time with dim lights and limited noise when possible, especially during the first four weeks
- Skin-on-skin contact
- The sound of your voice talking and singing
- Time on his tummy to strengthen his neck and core muscles
- Floor time so he can move his body around freely
- High contrast visuals

High Contrast Images

0 to 12 weeks

High Contrast Images

Why do this

Promoting rich neural networks
Decades of research show that time spent looking at high contrast images is important for a baby's cognitive development. When infants are stimulated visually, the connections between their eyes and brain strengthen. Babies rely mostly on their eyes for learning in the very early months.

How to do it

In the Play Gym

- Put the Black and White Cards in the Learn to Focus zone or attach the Black and White Cards to the clips along the inside of the legs of the Play Gym

- Set your baby on her back and encourage her head towards the images—she may focus on a single card for minutes at a time

Face to face

- Hold each card about 8 to 10 inches from her face until she looks away

- Start with the simple Black and White images—flip the cards over for more complex images when it seems she is losing interest in the first set

High Contrast Images During Tummy Time 0-12 weeks

High Contrast Images During Tummy Time

Why do this

Building strength
Tummy time builds the muscles and coordination needed for rolling over, crawling, reaching, and playing. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends supervised tummy time for full term infants starting in the first week.

How to do it

- Place your baby parallel to the Learn to Focus Zone so he can see the High Contrast Cards with his belly on the floor and head to one side
    - Once he starts lifting his head during tummy time, place a card directly on the mat in front of him
    - Once he starts lifting his head and chest, you can place him on his tummy facing the cards in the Learn to Focus Zone
- If he seems to be getting tired, crying, or resting his face on the Play Mat, it is time for a break
- He is developing the ability to lift his head—success is 1 to 3 minutes at a time in the first few months
- Tummy time can also be on your chest while you talk or sing to him, on your lap, or on your own belly facing you

Side Lying

0-12 weeks

Side Lying

Why do this

Preventing flat spots
Occupational therapists recommend side lying to prevent flat head syndrome. It is also important for balanced development.

How to do it

- Roll up a blanket and prop your baby onto her side using the blanket to support her back
- Have her look at the Black and White Cards in the Learn to Focus zone
- Detach and slowly roll the Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball in front of your baby
- Crinkle the Organic Cotton Teething Ring and talk about the noise it is making
- Switch her to her other side and repeat

Visual Tracking

0-12 weeks

Visual Tracking

Why do this

Building skills for reading
Watching a moving object helps fine-tune visual tracking, a skill that is important for reading, writing, and hand-eye coordination.

How to do it

- When your baby is alert, hold one black and white card about 8 to 10 inches from his eyes
- Slowly move the image from left to right to help him practice following a moving object with his eyes
- Slowly rotate the Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball and watch his eyes follow along

3-4 months

Months 3 and 4

Your baby

- Is social—she is cooing, smiling and increasingly alert
- Recognizes the people who take care of her and their voices
- Has limited depth perception and still prefers black and white images
- Can open and shut her fists
- Has better eye control—her eyes can follow you and moving objects
- Can hold her head upright, with it bobbing only occasionally
- Can hold her head up during tummy time and prop her chest up with her arms
- May start to bring objects toward her mouth for learning
- Will bat at objects to watch what happens
- Will hold a ring if it is placed between her fingers and palms, then bring it to her mouth to explore

Months 3 and 4

Give your baby

- A look at herself in the Mirror Cards
- Tours of her home environment with explanation and narration
- More complex Black and White Cards to look at
- Tummy time to strengthen her neck, back, and chest
- Lots of floor time—unrestricted movement helps the developing brain
- A chance to bat at toys and kick with her legs
- Cooing "conversations"—by repeating your baby's sounds back to her, you encourage her to keep communicating

Batting

3-4 months

Batting

Why do this

Building hand-eye coordination and discovering cause and effect Your baby is learning that he can have an impact in his world. With practice, he will improve his accuracy and intentionally grasp objects overhead within the next few months.

How to do it

- Once your baby starts opening and closing his hands, batting and grasping come next
- The Batting Ring is ergonomic for little fingers working on early grasping
- Position him so that when waving his hands he will come into contact with the Batting Ring, Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball, or Organic Cotton Teething Ring
- The Batting Ring, swinging on a pendulum, offers a challenge for older babies working on coordinating hand and eye movements
- Most babies won't swipe their arms at overhead objects until they are 3 or 4 months old

Kicking for Cause and Effect

3-4 months

Kicking for Cause and Effect

Why do this

Learning cause and effect
Your baby likes to kick her feet in the air while on her back. She is working her stomach muscles when she pulls her legs up. Your baby will also experience cause and effect by kicking and noticing what happens.

How to do it

- Place her on her back with feet over the Making Sounds zone
- As she moves her body and kicks her legs, she will hear the sounds the Play Mat makes
- You can also place her so her feet and legs make contact with the batting ring
- Eventually, she will be able to create sounds on purpose

Reaching, Grasping, and Mouthing

3-4 months

Reaching, Grasping, and Mouthing

Why do this

For sensory, speech, and oral motor development
As soon as he is able to hold objects he will want to put them in his mouth. Your baby's oral sensations are more developed right now than those in any other part of his body. Studies show mouthing helps with speech development and also prepares your baby to be open to different textures of food.

How to do it

On his back

- Position your baby with the hanging objects over his chest—he will work to reach, grasp, and mouth them
- Detach the Organic Cotton Teething Ring or Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball
- Hold it by his hand so that he can work to reach and get it to his mouth
- When your baby gets the Ball or Rings, you can tell him what happened: "You reached for the ball and got it!"

On his belly

- Place your baby in front of the How Things Feel zone to practice reaching, grasping, and mouthing

Getting Strong During Tummy Time

3-4 months

Getting Strong During Tummy Time

Why do this

Building her body for play
Tummy time is a lot of work for a baby. Some babies like it and some do not. Though not always fun, it is critical to build strength for reaching, rolling over, crawling, and playing. Think of tummy time as a play position.

How to do it

- Insert the Mirror Cards in the Learn to Focus zone
- Mirror gazing is a favorite activity for three to four month olds—though she can't recognize herself yet, she will see the baby looking back at her
- Place her on her tummy in front of the How Things Feel, Exploring Colors, or Making Sounds zones
- Detach the Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball and the Rings—see if your baby will reach for them

5-6 months

Months 5 and 6

Your baby

- Can bring his hands together in front of his face
- Has improved color vision and can see in three dimensions
- Can reach out to objects and people
- Uses his forearms—and later his hands and arms to lift his head and chest while lying on his tummy
- Will bang objects against surfaces, especially once he learns to sit
- Is looking for new experiences
- May sit alone with a rounded back for 5-10 seconds by leaning forward using his hands for support

Months 5 and 6

Give your baby

- Balls and safe objects to use for play and exploration
- Examples of sounds objects can make
- Plenty of time to move freely on the floor in loose clothing or a diaper
- Photos of other babies to look at—starting at this age your baby will love the Body Cards
- Your baby learns by simply being with you, at your level, while you walk around your house and do your thing
- Your baby will love exploring simple tasks like turning the lights on and off, opening and closing doors, and "helping" you make coffee or get a glass of water
- Narration of what he is seeing and experiencing

Moving Objects Between Hands

5-6 months

Moving Objects Between Hands

Why do this

Coordinating the halves of the brain
Moving an object between hands is a major milestone. The process stimulates coordination across both sides of your baby's brain. This early skill is the basis for later movements like getting dressed, eating with utensils, writing, and running.

How to do it

- The Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball and both Rings are grippable and designed to build dexterity
- Detach the Ball or Rings, then offer one to your baby
- See if your baby moves it from one hand to the other and explores it with her mouth
- Continually offer your baby opportunities to practice—it will take some time to build this skill

Grasping a Moving Toy

5-6 months

Grasping a Moving Toy

Why do this

Promoting concentration
The Batting Ring is designed to move at the slightest touch, helping your baby learn to focus.

How to do it

- Put baby on his back with the Batting Ring over his chest
- If he isn't interested right away, show him how it makes noise
- Note that your baby's ability to intentionally release an object won't fully develop until he is about a year old

Floor Time on Tummy

5-6 months

Floor Time on Tummy

Why do this

Building coordination
Even if your baby starts to sit up, she still needs tummy time to build strength. Tummy time helps exercise important muscles later needed for transitioning from sitting to crawling, and then from crawling to walking.

How to do it

- The How Things Feel, Exploring Colors, and Making Sounds zones give your baby an incentive to push against the floor for a better view of the excitement
- The bright colors and intricate designs in these zones are important for visual stimulation
- Roll the detachable Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball slowly so your baby can track it with her eyes and corral it with her arms
- With all of these activities she will practice rocking on her belly, swimming with her arms, reaching, and moving in a circle to get closer to things

Helping Baby Roll

5-6 months

Helping Baby Roll

Why do this

Gross motor development
Your baby will practice bringing his legs in towards his body during this phase, strengthening his core. This gross motor skill is his foundation for learning to roll from his back onto his belly.

How to do it

- While he is on his back, hold the detached Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball or Organic Cotton Teething Ring near him until he reaches for it
- Slowly move the object across his line of vision until he needs to roll over to see it
- Once your baby rolls over, give him the toy, and explain to him what he accomplished
- Your baby will likely roll from belly to back much sooner than rolling from back to belly. Here are the average ranges for when babies start rolling:
  - Back to side: Typically between 4-5.5 months
  - Belly to back: Typically between 4-5 months
  - Back to belly: Typically between 5.5-7.5 months

7-8 months

Months 7 and 8

Your baby

- Is more attuned to your voice, and can recognize words
- Looks at your lips, mouth, and teeth as you speak
- Sees differences in the details of small objects
- Starts to drop objects onto the floor, and may begin to look for them
- Attempts to use her fingers and thumb together to pick things up—a skill known as the pincer grasp
- Passes objects from hand to hand and then into her mouth—she will then bang or shake them and repeat this again and again
- May start to scoot herself around

Months 7 and 8

Give your baby

- Clothing that lets her move around freely
- Time to splash in the bath
- Board books
- Safe objects to mouth
- Responses to her babbling through back and forth "conversation" with her
- Objects that make noise
- The lead role in setting her development pace

Encouraging Forward Movement

7-8 months

Encouraging Forward Movement

Why do this

Stimulating both sides of the brain
Crawling helps your baby develop binocular vision, fine motor skills, and balance. Babies generally scoot before crawling.

How to do it

- Roll the Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball just out of reach during tummy time
- Detach the Teething Ring from the Hiding and Finding zone and spin it just out of reach on a hard floor
- When your baby reaches the Ball or Ring, he may try to rake it—as he gets better at raking he will begin to pick up objects
- Babies move backwards on their bellies first and learn how to scoot or crawl forward a little later

Hiding and Finding

7-8 months

Hiding and Finding

Why do this

Learning object permanence
Between six and nine months, your baby's brain will start to remember objects from one appearance to the next. Help her understand that when an object can't be seen, it is not gone forever.

How to do it

- Show your baby the Teething Ring, name it, and put it partially into the Hiding and Finding zone in the Play Gym
- Repeat this process a few times and explain what you are doing
- Encourage your baby to reach and pull the Teething Ring out herself

Sensory Play

7-8 months

Sensory Play

Why do this

Building intellectual and motor development
While your baby plays, the sensory information he receives establishes important neural connections. These experiences provide a critical foundation for future development.

How to do it

- Help him investigate each of the Play Mat zones with his eyes, ears, hands, mouth, and feet
- Let your baby explore the Play Mat in a diaper or onesie with bare legs and feet for maximum sensory input
- The Play Mat zones help develop four of his five primary senses—talk about the smells around him to add in his fifth sense

Naming Parts of the Body

7-8 months

Naming Parts of the Body

Why do this

Language development
Babies love photos of other babies. Your baby is learning that faces are different. She is able to focus with both of her eyes now and begins to look at the individual features of the face. She is starting to understand that each feature has a name, which is an important step in developing language skills.

How to do it

- Insert a Mirror Card alongside the Body Cards in the Learn to Focus zone
- Point to her nose in the mirror, the baby's nose on the Body Card, and your nose all while narrating what you are showing her
- She will listen, absorb, and learn even though she won't be able to point to body parts until much later

9-10 months

Months 9 and 10

Your baby

- Likes to pull up and lower himself while hanging onto furniture
- Can stand momentarily
- Loves interactive games like pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo
- Stares at himself in mirrors
- Studies the shape, form, and texture of objects
- Pokes his finger into tiny openings—if you haven't already, cover up electrical outlets!
- Makes new and intentional sounds while trying to mimic you
- May get himself into a seated position and sit without support

Months 9 and 10

Give your baby

- Chances to feed himself
- Comfort if he is nervous around strangers or clingy with familiar people
- Safe structures to pull up on*
- Mouthable objects such as the Organic Cotton Teething Ring to hide and find
- Time with his favorite books
- Conversations about everything around him—he may not be saying real words yet, but his language comprehension is advancing rapidly
- Music to bounce to

* The Play Gym wood legs and accessories are not intended for your child to use as support while pulling up

Experiencing Words in Different Contexts 9-10 months

Experiencing Words in Different Contexts

Why do this

Building vocabulary
In order to associate words with meaning, your baby needs to hear words in different contexts. This is how she will learn that photos and illustrations represent real things.

How to do it

- Play "Let's find it"—show your baby one of the Object Cards, say "Let's find it," locate the object, and then say "There it is!"

- Continue the game throughout your home—"Is the banana in the kitchen? Oh look, there it is on the counter. Do you see the yellow banana on the counter right there? Why don't we peel and slice the banana. I'm peeling the banana. I am taking a bite. Do you want a bite?"

Banging Objects Together

9-10 months

Banging Objects Together

Why do this

Using objects with purpose
Babies bang objects together as a way to play. By doing so, your baby will learn to move his arms with intention, learn cause and effect, and practice hand-eye coordination.

How to do it

- Rhythm and music are often the earliest ways babies experience mathematics—when your baby bangs, bang back in the same rhythm to teach patterning

- At some point between months eight and twelve, your baby will be able to bang two objects together—such as the two Rings detached from the Play Gym

Introducing Concepts

9-10 months

Introducing Concepts

Why do this

Building neural networks
Concepts allow us to understand categories of information in a faster and more streamlined way. Even though concepts are abstract and not easy for babies to immediately understand, your baby is ready to learn about space and location, quantity, time, and opposites. Practicing these concepts early and frequently will help your baby make sense of her world.

How to do it

- **Open/Closed** is a concept demonstrating opposites—open then close each of the Play Mat zones, then encourage your baby to do the same while explaining what is happening
- **In/Out** is a concept showing space and location—take the Ring in and out of the pockets while explaining when they are in or out
- **Now/Then** is a concept to teach time—"Now I'm showing you the Ball, then I will roll it to you"
- **Some/All** is a concept related to quantity—during feeding for example "You have all of the puffs"

Sitting Up with Hands Free to Play

9-10 months

Sitting Up with Hands Free to Play

Why do this

Developing gross motor skills
At this age, babies like to sit up on their own and no longer need their hands for support. Your baby is improving his balance and coordination when he uses his hands to reach and play from a seated position.

How to do it

- Sit your baby in the Play Gym without support facing the Batting Ring, Organic Cotton Teething Ring, or the Organic Cotton High Contrast Ball
- Hold the Ball or Rings out for your baby so that he has to use his hands to grasp them
- Position your baby sitting to one side of the Ball or Rings to help him practice twisting while reaching

11-12 months

Months 11 and 12

Your baby

- Handles and examines objects carefully
- Plays alongside, but not yet with, other children
- Puts lids on containers and takes them off again
- Moves her whole body to music—though not necessarily to the beat
- Takes a stacking ring toy apart
- Understands what "no" means
- Learns how to get and keep attention positively by repeating a sound or gesture if others laugh

Months 11 and 12

Give your baby

- Balls, rolling toys, and board books
- Plenty of chances to work on crawling, standing and walking
- Lots of conversation about herself and the world around her
- Time spent passing or rolling objects back and forth with you
- Empathy when she is frustrated or having a hard time—explain to her how she is feeling so she can begin to understand emotions
- Gentle explanation when her behavior is not okay—she doesn't know right from wrong quite yet
- Affection and praise for her efforts
- Time dancing and singing together

Give yourself a pat on the back for making it through the first year!

Containment Play

11-12 months

Containment Play

Why do this

Developing the senses by learning how things feel
Vision is the naturally dominant informational sense in the first year, but it is important to also encourage the sense of touch. As your baby becomes more capable of hearing and understanding language, he will begin to connect your descriptions of objects and the way they feel in his hands.

How to do it

- Completely or partially hide objects in the Hiding and Finding zone
- Have him reach into the pockets to feel the object
- Let him pull the object out and then describe it to him
- Some ideas include:
    - Items from nature
    - Straws or ribbons
    - A baby toothbrush, a makeup brush

Note: Please be sure to not offer your baby small objects that present a choking hazard

Peek-A-Boo!

11-12 months

Peek-A-Boo!

Why do this

Gaining social and emotional benefits
Peek-a-boo is a classic game. Your baby is learning the concept of object permanence—even though you can't be seen, your baby is learning that you are still there.

How to do it

- Place the Play Space Cover over the Play Gym
- See if your baby wants to crawl in and out while peeking at you
- Peek at your baby from under one side of the Play Space Cover when they are inside
- Place a favorite stuffed animal inside and play peek-a-boo with her

Play "Show Me"

11-12 months

Play "Show Me"

Why do this

Developing communication skills

Your baby will start to point between twelve and sixteen months. When you point at something and describe it, your baby will pattern after you and grow his communication skills.

How to do it

- Point to the baby's nose on the card, then your own nose, and then your baby's nose to build the connection between the word "nose" and the feature
- Show your baby the Body Cards and say "Where is the baby's nose?"
- Use the Object Cards to point to additional objects and name them—if you have the object on hand, show it to your baby to create a real-world connection
- When you speak at a slightly slower pace about what's happening in the moment, he can hear the separation between words and sounds. Enjoy your "conversations" by responding when he makes sounds back at you

Ball Play

11-12 months

Ball Play

Why do this

Learning foundational motor skills
Balls give your baby an opportunity to practice hand-eye coordination and to learn about how objects move in space

How to do it

- Practice rolling a ball back and forth with your baby—this seemingly simple activity is actually complex, requiring her to anticipate movement, track objects, and coordinate the catch with her hands
- Somewhere between ten and twelve months, your baby will be able to respond to one-step verbal commands with gestures—for example, "Please give me the ball" while pointing to it
- Help develop your baby's memory by hiding a ball under a blanket or behind the couch—show her what you are doing and after a short break, see if she can find it
- If she needs help finding it, go to the spot together

Thank you for sharing the Lovevery Play Gym with your little one.

A reminder to please supervise your baby while doing the enclosed activities and do not leave your baby unattended. Please do not let your baby play with these cards. They are for you.

We are here for you! If you have questions about these activities or the Play Gym, please email heretohelp@lovevery.com